

Charter for the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

This Charter is issued by resolution of the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to take effect from 3 August 2012.

1.0 Introduction

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is established under the *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act 2008* (ACARA Act) of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia.

The ACARA Act prescribes the following permissive functions of the Authority as:

- to develop and administer a national school curriculum, including content of the curriculum and achievement standards, for school subjects specified in the Charter
- to develop and administer national assessments
- to collect, manage and analyse student assessment data and other data relating to schools and comparative school performance
- to facilitate information sharing arrangements between Australian government bodies in relation to the collection, management and analysis of school data
- to publish information relating to school education, including information relating to comparative school performance
- to provide school curriculum resource services, educational research services and other related services
- to provide information, resources, support and guidance to the teaching profession
- to perform such other functions that are conferred on it by, or under, the Act or any other Commonwealth Act, and
- to perform such other functions that are ancillary or incidental to the functions mentioned above.

Section 7 (3) of the ACARA Act states that the Authority must also perform its functions and exercise its powers in accordance with this Charter which is determined from time to time by the Ministerial Council of Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers for Education, currently known as the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood.

2.0 Purpose of the Charter

The Charter enables the Standing Council to set the strategic direction for the Authority. It provides guidance about the nature of the activities the Authority is expected to undertake in fulfilling its functions and executing the policy directions set by the Standing Council. The Charter is supported by a Letter of Expectation from the Standing Council that provides more specific guidance on the work expected of the Authority over a two-year period.

This Charter replaces the revised Charter approved by the former Ministerial Council which took effect from 1 July 2010.

The Charter is able to be amended at any time by resolution at a Standing Council meeting, resolution through an out of session process conducted by the Standing Council Secretariat, or through any other process that the Standing Council determines.

3.0 Strategic directions and work priorities

The strategic directions for the Authority relate to the following three key areas of curriculum, assessment and data collection and reporting at a national level:

1. A national curriculum from Foundation¹ to Year 12 in specified learning areas.
2. A national assessment program aligned to the national curriculum that measures students' progress.
3. A national data collection and reporting program that supports:
 - i. analysis, evaluation, research and resource allocation, and
 - ii. accountability and reporting on schools, and broader national achievement.

These strategic directions acknowledge the commitment to promoting world-class curriculum and assessment and to strengthening accountability and transparency as identified within the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (the *Melbourne Declaration*) as agreed by all Education Ministers in December 2008.

Having regard to its functions under the ACARA Act, the Authority, in addressing its strategic directions, will undertake the following work priorities:

General priorities

1. Establish and maintain the structures and processes that will ensure its advice to the Standing Council on national curriculum, assessment and data reporting is based on the best evidence available.
2. Establish and maintain ACARA's position as an authoritative and accessible national resource for all key stakeholders. This will involve the Authority in informing, strengthening and promoting general community understanding of the significance of national curriculum, assessment and reporting processes to achieve improved educational outcomes for all Australian students. Recognising that learning begins before the first year of formal schooling, ACARA will make appropriate links with developments in early childhood education to support a seamless continuum of learning.
3. Work closely with Education Services Australia and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership to provide innovative and cost effective educational services across all sectors of education.

¹ Kindergarten in New South Wales, Tasmania, and the Australian Capital Territory; Preparatory in Victoria and Queensland; Reception in South Australia; Transition in the Northern Territory, Pre-primary in Western Australia.

Curriculum priorities

4. Develop a national curriculum from Foundation to Year 12, in the eight learning areas under the *Melbourne Declaration*, as directed by the Standing Council. This will include the:
 - a. development of content descriptions, content elaborations, achievement standards and annotated work samples for each subject or learning area
 - b. development of continua of learning for the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities, and
 - c. integration within appropriate content descriptions and content elaborations of general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.
5. Support the Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Senior Officials Committee (AEEYSOC) to advise the Standing Council on:
 - a. how the national curriculum addresses the diverse needs of students, including students with disability and students for whom English is another language or dialect
 - b. the most effective processes for implementing and sustaining the national curriculum within the states and territories
 - c. the most effective process for implementing the national curriculum into the senior secondary years of schooling
 - d. the most effective processes for ensuring the continuous improvement of Australia's national curriculum reflecting evidence and experience as the curriculum development work continues and the curriculum is implemented
 - e. the support required for states and territories to implement national curriculum as it is developed, including teaching resources and teacher professional development
 - f. how the achievement standards and annotated work samples provided as part of the national curriculum can support nationally consistent teacher professional judgement and A-E reporting to parents, and
 - g. whether alternative curriculum frameworks meet the requirements of the national curriculum.

National Assessment priorities

6. Manage the development, and oversee the delivery of assessments and reporting for the National Assessment Program (NAP) including the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), and NAP sample assessments as directed by the Standing Council.
7. Facilitate alignment of national assessment practice with the national curriculum by supporting AEEYSOC to advise the Standing Council on options for the future of the NAP ensuring the program reflects the Australian Curriculum, links to international assessments and the objectives of the performance reporting agenda, and implement any changes to the NAP as determined by the Standing Council
8. Advise on how national assessments could be developed and delivered through on-screen delivery platforms, and how a transition from a paper-based to an online delivery model could be undertaken.

Data collection and reporting priorities

9. In accordance with the *Principles and protocols for reporting on schooling in Australia* (June 2009), collect, manage, analyse, evaluate and report statistical and related information about schools and the outcomes of schooling, as required by the Council of Australian Governments and under the National Education Agreement (or any successor agreement) for performance monitoring, including:
 - a. Monitoring, and where necessary reviewing, the existing national key performance measures for schools in light of the national goals outlined in the *Melbourne Declaration*, and the accountability requirements established in the National Education Agreement and *Schools Assistance Act 2008*;
 - b. producing a comprehensive and authoritative national report on schooling in Australia related to the *Melbourne Declaration* and national key performance measures;
 - c. developing, or supporting the development of, national definitions such as a definition on students with a disability and students with a language background other than English;
 - d. collecting national data (including on individual schools) for the purpose of accountability and reporting, research and analysis, and resource allocation as directed by the Standing Council; and
 - e. analysing data as required by Ministers and their departments to support system management and policy.
10. Manage the collection, quality assurance and reporting of school information through the *My School* website and support AEEYSOC to advise the Standing Council on improvements to the website.

4.0 Reporting on strategic directions and work priorities

The primary function of the Authority is to execute the policy directions that are determined by the Standing Council and set out in this Charter and ACARA's Letter of Expectation.

Matters relating to ACARA will be considered at each Standing Council meeting. At each meeting ACARA will provide a written report to Ministers which should include, but not be limited to, a report on ACARA's progress against its annual work plan (which is informed by the Letter of Expectation), an update on recent activities and any emerging issues.

On a quadrennial basis, ACARA will prepare for the Standing Council a four-year work plan and budget to assist in ensuring it continues to meet the strategic needs of the Standing Council.

On an annual basis, ACARA will, according to a financial year, prepare a detailed work plan for the Standing Council's endorsement that sets out the key deliverables, budget and timeframes for addressing the strategic directions and work priorities set out in this Charter and the Letter of Expectation. The forward work plan will include reasonable timelines to ensure the Standing Council can support ACARA's work.

ACARA will also provide an annual report to the Council as required under section 43 of the ACARA Act.

From time to time, the Standing Council may choose, at its discretion, to seek policy advice from the Authority regarding issues related to curriculum, assessment, data collection and reporting at a national level. In undertaking its activities, the Authority may also formally identify or refer particular issues requiring policy direction or clarification to the Standing Council for its consideration.